

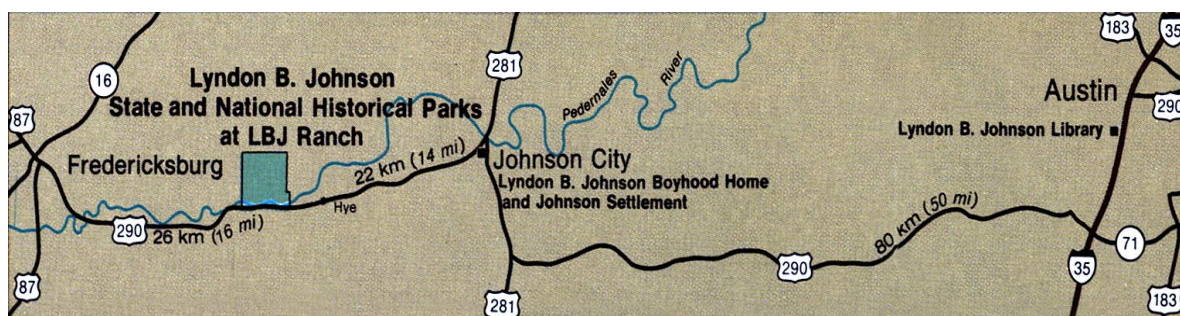
# Report

## Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park

### ■ 1.0 Site Description

Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park (NHP) is located in the heart of the Texas Hill Country. The park has two visitor areas separated by about 14 miles: The Johnson Settlement/Visitor Center/Park Headquarters in Johnson City and the Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) Ranch near Stonewall (see Figure 1). The Park Visitor Center in Johnson City is 50 miles west of Austin and 60 miles north of San Antonio. The following is a description of the eight distinct properties located at these visitor areas:

**Figure 1. Austin to Fredericksburg**



#### 1.1 Johnson City District

- **Visitor Center** – The Visitor Center/Headquarters in Johnson City contains a permanent exhibit that showcases LBJ’s life and accomplishments. In this presidential park, it is possible to trace the ancestry, heritage, and life of the 36th President of the United States.
- **Johnson Settlement** – LBJ’s grandfather and great-uncle established a cattle droving headquarters here in the 1860s. Their log cabin and subsequent barns, cooler house, and windmill still exist today. There is also a modern exhibit center focusing on the cattle business, early Johnson family and settlement history, and Hill Country survival. A chuck wagon and longhorn cattle round out the “cowboy” atmosphere.
- **LBJ Boyhood Home** – The former President lived here from the age of five until his high school graduation in 1924. The home is furnished in the early to mid-1920s period and as such depicts a rural Texas lifestyle of 70 years ago.

## **1.2 LBJ Ranch District**

- **The LBJ Ranch House** – The LBJ Ranch House, known as the Texas White House, was the home of President Johnson and a center of political activity for more than 20 years. Today, Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson resides here.
- **The Reconstructed Birthplace** – The Reconstructed Birthplace was built by President Johnson in 1964 on the site where he was born in 1908. The Johnson's furnished the home with family memorabilia and used it as a guest cottage.
- **Johnson Family Cemetery** – Along with his ancestors, President Johnson is buried here.
- **Junction School House** – LBJ first attended classes in this one-room school house. As President, LBJ signed into law the Elementary and Secondary Education Act at the same one room school.
- **Show Barn** – At this location President Johnson showcased his Hereford Cattle to friends and visitors.

The two areas comprising the Lyndon B. Johnson NHP consists of the eight attractions described above. The park was authorized on December 2, 1969 and was redesignated from a historic site to a national historical park on December 28, 1980. Present holdings are approximately 1,572 acres, 551 of which are federal. The Johnson family continues to add to this property; their most recent donation of acreage occurred in April 1995.

The Johnson City and LBJ Ranch Districts are approximately 14 miles apart. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department manages the State Historical Park Visitor Center near Stonewall where the visitor can ride the NPS bus to the LBJ Ranch, which is managed by the NPS. Located in Johnson City, the Visitor Center and LBJ Boyhood Home are surrounded by a mix of residential and commercial development. The Johnson Settlement, which is located at the southwest corner of town, is bordered by residential and commercial development to the north and rural rangeland to the south. The LBJ Ranch District and its accompanying attractions are surrounded by rural hilly terrain common in this region.

The park is open every day except Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. In 1998, approximately 124,000 people visited the park. The majority of visitors are from Texas, but international visitors are not uncommon. Visitation remains steady from June to October. The highest visitation period occurs during the wildflower season of March and April. The lowest visitation is in August and January as these are the hottest and coldest months. As indicated by the NPS staff, the park has experienced a reduction in visitation in recent years. With the opening of the LBJ Ranch House (Texas White House) to the public however, this trend may be reversed.

The park completed a General Management Plan (GMP) in 1999 that emphasizes the implementation of a transportation system which serves to preserve the park's natural, historic, and cultural resources as well as meet visitor needs. The main components of the GMP include: the adoption of a "drop-and-run" shuttle service upon the opening of the

Texas White House, the development of a bus maintenance facility, and the reestablishment of a wagon operation in Johnson City.

## ■ 2.0 Existing ATS

As mentioned above, the Johnson City District consists of the Visitor Center, Johnson Settlement and LBJ Boyhood Home. The LBJ Ranch District consists of the Texas White House, Reconstructed Birthplace, Johnson Family Cemetery, and Junction School House. Parking and bus services are provided at the visitor centers at both these locations. Private vehicles are prohibited from entering the Johnson Settlement or LBJ Ranch areas.

While many of the attractions in the Johnson City District are within walking distance from the Visitor Center, the NPS provides a 15-passenger electric bus service to the Johnson Settlement when needed. Approximately 3,000 visitors utilize this service annually. Additionally, a nature trail is available at the Johnson Settlement.

Bus tours of the LBJ Ranch are conducted by the NPS, and start at the State Park Visitor Center. Approximately 94,000 visitors utilize this NPS-provided bus service annually. The tour passes by the one-room Junction School House first attended by the four-year old LBJ in 1912 and continues to his Reconstructed Birthplace and the nearby Johnson Family Cemetery where the former President is buried. Tours also take visitors by the Texas White House and through the working ranch where cattle are still worked. A \$3.00 fee is charged for the tour (visitors ages seven and under are free). It takes approximately one hour and 15 minutes to complete the LBJ Ranch tour.

Other mass transportation vehicles utilized by the park include three small “tour” type buses built in 1973, which were transferred by the NPS from its Grand Canyon site. Because these vehicles lack air conditioning, reliable sound systems and other modern amenities, their use is limited.

Providing bus services in Johnson City and LBJ Ranch districts is estimated to cost approximately \$500,000 per year. Nearly \$300,000 is attributed to operations, while vehicle and facility maintenance requires another \$200,000.

## ■ 3.0 ATS Needs

Additional Alternative Transportation Systems (ATS) needs identified in the 1999 GMP include:

- The addition of passenger depots for visitors utilizing the bus services. With the opening of the Texas White House the park intends to convert its current system, which is primarily “tour” oriented, to a “drop-and-run” shuttle service. Accordingly,

this new system will require adequate facilities at which visitors can be dropped off and picked up.

- Additional funding for the maintenance and upgrading of buses. In 1987 a study was conducted to determine the type of bus that would be appropriate for the park. In 1995, this study guided the purchasing of the five propane-powered buses currently in use. This particular model of bus, however, is no longer manufactured. As such, the purchasing of parts and general maintenance of these vehicles is becoming increasingly difficult and expensive. The estimated life span of the current fleet is 2010.
- Reestablish a horse-drawn wagon operation in Johnson City. This system would transport visitors to each of the main attractions within Johnson City, including the Johnson Settlement. Used in the early years of the park, this system was well received by both visitors and local residents.
- The addition of tourist-oriented signage and way finding devices both inside and outside of the park. According to the NPS staff, the current lack of these devices has played a role in decreasing visitation. This signage will become increasingly important if the tour system is converted to a “drop-and-run” shuttle system.
- The provision of a new bus maintenance facility and interpretive offices. In an effort to achieve the goals outlined in the 1999 GMP, such as preserving natural, cultural and historic resources, the NPS staff believes it is imperative to relocate their maintenance and interpretive services facility. Presently, the NPS utilizes an area north of the Texas White House, known as the Show Barn.

## ■ 4.0 Basis of ATS Needs

The bus service, which costs the NPS approximately \$500,000 per year, is viewed as a necessity to meet visitor interpretive goals, provide a pleasant visitor experience and preserve historic, cultural and natural resources. The bus service enables the park to interpret the story of the 36<sup>th</sup> President of the United States in a unique and encompassing way. With the opening of the Texas White House, the efficiency and reliability of this bus system will be more critical than any other time in the park’s history. As discussed earlier, the addition of maintenance funding and upgrading the current bus supply is necessary to meet anticipated needs.

Additional services proposed would have the following benefits:

- Given the anticipated change from the present system to a “drop-and-run” approach, the addition of passenger depots at three to four strategic locations is viewed as a necessity to ensure a pleasant visitor experience.
- The reestablishment of a horse-drawn wagon operation to enhance the “cowboy” atmosphere and theme in Johnson City. In keeping with the historic traditions of this area, the wagon system is intended to enhance the visitor’s experience and convenience,

while adding a valuable attraction to the community. Additionally, it would enable park personnel greater flexibility in managing the flow of visitors in this area.

- Additional tourist signage and way finding devices will better inform tourists traveling to other adjacent attractions, such as the historic town of Fredericksburg, of the many attractions and opportunities available at the park.
- The provision of a new maintenance facility, preferably near the Visitor Center operated by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, is viewed as necessary for both convenience and cost effectiveness. Additionally, this provision will ensure that the integrity of the Show Barn and its adjacent resources are preserved.

## ■ 5.0 Bibliography

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Lyndon B. Johnson State Historical Park. Internet Site. <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/lbj/lbj.htm>. Information printed November 23, 1999.

National Park Service. "Lyndon B. Johnson National Historic Park, Texas." Map/Brochure. GPO: 1998-432-903/60198. Reprint 1998.

## ■ 6.0 Persons Interviewed

Bob Howard, LBJ NHP. Telephone Conversation on November 15, 1999.

Dave Sheier, Bob Howard, and Leslie Starr Hart of LBJ NHP. Telephone Conversation on November 16, 1999.